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ABSTRACT

Since the understanding of influences in career decision making (CDM) remains an important question for counselors, this study sought to identify some of the forces that impact CDM, specifically, the impact of relevant career experiences (RCEs) on the CDM process. Relevant Career Experience(s) were defined as any paid or non-paid experience involving activities similar to the activities involved in the chosen career/occupation. An autobiographical sketch, the Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale (CMI-AS), and a Relevant Career Experience (RCE) questionnaire were administered to 37 college students. In order to ascertain the influences of RCEs on college students' CDM, the obtained data were analyzed with respect to three hypotheses. The first hypothesis stated that individuals with at least one RCE would have a higher level of career maturity than individuals without an RCE. The difference in the two groups' career maturity scores was significant and supported this hypothesis. The second hypothesis stated that individuals with at least one RCE would be more satisfied with their career decision than individuals without an RCE. Results showed that the differences between the two groups' levels of satisfaction with their career decisions was not significant. The third hypothesis stated that individuals with at least one RCE would be more confident about implementing their career choice than individuals without an RCE. Support for this hypothesis was evidenced. The evaluation instruments are included. (BHK)

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HOW RELEVANT CAREER EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE CAREER DECISION MAKING

by

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REPORT

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for the Degree of

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HOW RELEVANT CAREER EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE

CAREER DECISION MAKING

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Issue

Career decision making seems to be a concept difficult to define. Hilton (1962) noted that career decision-making (CDM) is, at best, an imperfect process. During the past two decades CDM has been the subject of a number of studies (Blustein, 1987; Carson & Mowsesian, in press; Gati, 1986; Jepsen & Dilley, 1974). Researchers continue to look for models and theories that will enhance understanding of the CDM process so that counselors might more effectively assist individuals as they move through this cycle.

There has been extensive research in this area, and a review of the literature reveals various foci. Hypotheses have been formulated regarding antecedents, concomitants, and outcomes of CDM (Hershenson & Roth, 1966). Some studies (Blustein, 1987; Gati, 1986; Phillips, Pazienza, & Walsh, 1984) have attempted to link decision-making styles to the effectiveness of the CDM process. Phillips (1982) also examined patterns of vocational commitment and desirable career outcomes.

Recognition of the various influencers on CDM and an awareness of the changing nature of the workplace in

American society compels researchers to clarify what might be helpful to individuals with their career decisions.

Problem Area and Research Questions

Since the understanding of influences on CDM remains an important question for counselors as well as any individual who has or will ever be faced with such a decision, this study seeks to identify and clarify some of the forces that impact CDM, specifically, the impact of "relevant career experiences (RCEs)" on the CDM process (see "Definitions" section in this chapter).

The research questions are hinged on aspects of two theories: the instrumental learning experiences as set forth in the social learning theory of Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones (1976) and the time perspective of Super's (1983) developmental career counseling theory.

The first hypothesis is that individuals who have had at least one RCE will have a higher level of career maturity than individuals who have not had an RCE. The second hypothesis is that individuals who have had at least one RCE will be more satisfied (see "Definitions" section) with their career decision than individuals who have not had an RCE. The third hypothesis is that individuals who have had at least one RCE will be more

confident about implementing their career choice than individuals who have not had an RCE.

Definitions

Because the parameters of this investigation include terminology that might be subject to misinterpretation, the following definitions are provided to avoid confusion:

(1) Relevant Career Experience(s) (RCE): any paid or non-paid experience involving activities similar to the activities involved in the chosen career/occupation. Similarity between activities of the RCE and the chosen career will be determined by Holland codes.

(2) Satisfaction/Intrinsic Satisfaction (Prediger, 1979, p. 112): "...information about the specifics of one type of value, `liking what I'm doing'."

(3) Shadowing (Watts as cited in Herr & Watts, 1988, p. 80): "...schemes in which an observer follows a worker around for a period of time, observing the various tasks in which he or she engages, and doing so within the context of his or her total role."

Limitations of the Study

Due to the multitude of factors that may affect the CDM process, a comprehensive overview of all elements is not deemed realistic in a single study. While agents

like decision-making style, personality characteristics, family history, ethnicity, gender, intellectual and physical capabilities, and an infinite host of others all surely impact an individual's CDM process, these issues will not be considered in this study.

Organization of the Report

The importance of this area of research as well as the hypotheses were stated in the first and second sections, respectively, of this chapter. The third section of this chapter gave the reader definitions of terms while the fourth section addressed the limitations for this study.

The second chapter will provide a review of pertinent literature beginning with an overview of some models of CDM paying particular attention to relevant experience and time-perspective attributes of each model. Next, the concept of career maturity will be reviewed especially as it relates to CDM.

The third chapter will present the method used in obtaining this study's sample, data gathering, treatment of the data, and subsequent results.

The fourth chapter will offer discussion about the methods and results of the study.

Finally, chapter five will address the conclusions

and implications of the results for counselors and other professionals involved with students facing career decisions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In beginning to explore the career decision making (CDM) process, researchers laid down the foundation of general decision theory. Gelatt (1962) noted that decision theory is a framework within which people choose between alternate courses of action with which they are continually confronted. Girshick (cited in Gelatt, 1962) advocated the use of decision theory in school guidance because it requires that one clearly define one's goals and the consequences of one's decision in order to make a decision. Chernoff and Moses (cited in Gelatt, 1962) also recognized advantages of utilizing decision theory in many situations that people face when it is not clear what they are to do. Psychological decision theory provided an orderly description of what variables influence choice (Edwards & Tversky as cited in Jepsen & Dilley, 1974). The present study will attempt to focus on one such influential variable, relevant career experiences (RCE), as it relates to career maturity, satisfaction with the career decision, and confidence that the decision can be implemented.

Review of the literature on career decision making

revealed several CDM models each with its own unique core. Some of these models of CDM include: sequential elimination versus expected utility, both of which call for criteria selection based on subjective value (Gati, 1986; Katz, 1969a); decision-making styles of rational, intuitive, and dependent (Harren, 1979); cognitive dissonance which can be viewed as a motivating factor (Hilton, 1962); differentiation and integration stages of exploration, crystallization, choice, and clarification (Tiedeman & O-Hara, 1963); the process of decision-making in addition to the outcome utilizing the organization of information (Gelatt, 1962); and social learning theory which highlights positive and negative influences on occupational preferences and entry into a career (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976).

There are other models of CDM. However, for the purpose of this report an elaboration of some aspects of social learning theory of CDM will be supplied as these aspects relate to the three previously stated hypotheses.

Pertinent Aspects of Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory of career selection as set forth by Krumboltz et al. (1976) identifies the interaction of several influential factors on CDM. One factor of particular interest here is that of learning

experiences which is further subdivided into instrumental learning experiences (ILEs) and associative learning experiences (ALEs).

ILEs are described as those situations in which the individual has the opportunity to operate on the environment directly and observe the outcomes. In the present study the RCE is an example of and ILE whether the RCE was an internship; paid or non-paid, full- or part-time work experience; or cooperative work program any of which involved activities similar to the activities of the student's current career choice. Some college students may have been involved in such an experience as a result of an organized internship or cooperative education program via their academic major or as a result of work or volunteering pursued individually.

ALEs are defined in social learning theory as those situations in which the individual observes relationships between events and can then pair the previously neutral stimuli with some emotionally positive or negative reaction. For the purpose of this study the ALE is work shadowing (see Definitions section in Chapter I for this term).

Both types of learning experiences stress the importance of observation as an outcome--what the theory

calls self-observation generalizations (SOGs). Krumboltz (as cited in Herr & Cramer, 1988) noted that these SOGs are overt or covert self-statements evaluating one's own past or present behavior with that of others or an idealized standard. The ILEs would most likely allow one to make direct and current comparisons between one's own performance and the performance of others involved in the same career activities. When considering an RCE as one kind of ILE, the RCE allows one the chance to find out what the required activities/skills are for that occupation. One can then compare oneself to other workers' competence in the same activities. As one makes these comparisons, generalizations may be drawn as to one's ability level, interest, and/or valuing of the activities of that occupation.

It is worth noting that social learning theorists consider the possibility that interests result from experiences in addition to experiences resulting from preexisting interests. The preferences that are developed as a result of SOGs about experiences are the building blocks of CDM. Bem (cited in Thoresen & Ewart, 1978) noted a similar consequence of self-perception resulting from observations of one's own actions.

Another outcome of ILEs and ALEs is the development

of task approach skills (TASs) or what are more commonly referred to as CDM skills. The TASs of interest in this study are those of reinterpreting past events and predicting future events. The connection of these two TASs to the RCE is direct. The individual who has participated in an RCE would be able to consider the experience in terms of how much it influenced current preferences for occupational activities as well as how much it affirmed the likelihood of entry into that occupation.

The hypotheses formulated by social learning theory logically follow from the stated variables and outcomes, some of which have been highlighted above. The following social learning hypotheses are those that tie into the three previously stated research questions. First, Krumboltz et al. (1976) postulated that an individual is more likely to express a preference or interest in an occupation or field of work if the individual has been positively reinforced for engaging in activities that are normally associated with successful performance of that occupation. In support of this proposition, Mitchell (1979) cited two separate studies by Baird and Osipow. The first examined more than 2,000 community college students and found that the students who raised their

level of aspiration for more education were the students who had been positively reinforced with high grades. The second study of males and females found that task preferences changed in the direction of a positively reinforced stimulus. If, via an RCE, one has performed at least adequately in the activities of a given occupation, hopefully one has also been positively reinforced by a supervisor, coworkers, teachers, family, and/or friends.

Two other social learning hypotheses address factors which influence entry-into-occupation behaviors. One hypothesis states that an individual is more likely to enter an occupation or field if that individual has been exposed to employment opportunities of that occupation. The second hypothesis states that an individual is more likely to enter an occupation if the individual has learned the required skills for that occupation. Support for these hypotheses has been indicated by Horner, Buterbaugh, and Carefoot as well as Mansfield (as cited by Mitchell, 1979). Mitchell also noted theoretical support for the last hypothesis based on Ginzberg's revised theory and Holland's third statement of his theory as both speak of career choice and development as a process of looking for a place in the world of work

where one can exercise preferred interests, skills, and values.

It seems that there is a connection between the above stated hypotheses of social learning theory. If one has a positive experience in an occupation where the skills relevant to the occupation are learned then one will probably also develop an interest in that area and increase the potential of entering that occupation. Tying this to the present study, an RCE would be one avenue for learning the skills and developing an interest for any given occupational activity which might then translate into a career choice.

A related study (Ware & Pogge, 1980) investigated the relationship between certainty of career choice and career decision-making skills. Two of the research items explored college students' certainty of postgraduate plans and their satisfaction with those plans. Results from that study indicated that the less vocationally mature students had fewer CDM skills and were less certain about their career choices. These same students were noted to have generalized from their college major to expectations about career choice and those who were more/less satisfied with their academic major were also found to experience more certainty/uncertainty,

respectively, regarding their career plans.

In a separate study Ware (1980) found that fewer students with high vocational maturity, as assessed by the Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale, identified previous or current work experiences as a significant event influencing their career preferences than did students with low vocational maturity. He explained this finding in the context of career maturity and concluded that students with higher levels of vocational maturity can discriminate better between education and careers while employing more cognitive processes to interpret more symbolic forms of vicarious experiences. Students with lower levels of vocational maturity, he stated, rely more on the concrete forms of direct events.

The application to the present study is to go beyond the association of academic major to career and determine if students with higher/lower levels of career maturity are correspondingly the students with/without RCEs which, in turn, lead to more certainty/uncertainty about implementing the career decision. It will also be important to ascertain when the RCE occurred relative to the career decision.

Time Perspective

As previously stated CDM is a process that does not

lend itself easily to a simple definition. Furthermore, it is not a notion that exists separately from other aspects of individual development. Super (1983) regards decision-making as a principle dimension of career maturity, a topic to be covered later in this chapter. Super's developmental approach to counseling also includes other dimensions of career maturity one of which is of interest in this study--planfulness which includes a component called time perspective, which will be discussed in more detail later. Other researchers (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma as cited in Osipow, 1983; Harren, 1979; Savickas, Silling, & Schwartz, 1984) have recognized the importance of time perspective and they too will be discussed in this section.

As previously stated, Super (1983) denotes time perspective as a component of planfulness which is a principle dimension of career maturity. Time perspective consists of the individual incorporating past experiences into anticipation of a career future. For the purpose of this study the past experiences would be the RCE(s).

The question, then, is whether the individual has reflected upon the RCE in making a decision about a career choice for the immediate future. Super (1983) sees the ability to incorporate time perspective as one

personality trait that helps determine the individual's level of career maturity.

Similarly, Harren's (1979) model of CDM, which is limited in application to typical college students, describes four parameters of CDM, two of which are applicable to the present study. The first parameter, process, includes a dimension of awareness which is defined as a process wherein the individual pays attention to the present self-in-situation and then includes part of the past as well as the future in the psychological present.

The fourth parameter of Harren's model ties together the aspect of time perspective and social learning theory's positive reinforcement. This parameter, condition, contains a dimension, termed interpersonal evaluations which allows for the influence of situational factors on the decision maker's psychological state. From the positive feedback the decision maker receives from others the individual's past decision is reinforced as is the current decision being planned.

These parameters of Harren's model translate to this study in the sense that, first, the RCE is hypothesized to be a vehicle by which the decision maker is able to utilize past experiences from the RCE to help in

clarifying decisions about a future career. During the course of the individual's participation in the RCE the feedback received from others has given the individual information to incorporate into the self-appraisal related to the work situation. This integrated self-appraisal will likely affect the individual's level of career maturity.

Another theory of CDM, the Ginzberg et al. (as cited in Osipow, 1983) theory of vocational choice, postulates four important ingrediants that contribute to an individual's occupational choice during adolescence. Two of the ingrediants are a suitable time perspective and reality testing. In a later reformulation of the theory, Ginzberg (1972) also noted the importance of the feedback between an original choice and subsequent work experience. One of the intents of the present study is to determine if RCEs do, in fact, provide the individual with feedback and, if so, at what point in the decision making process.

Career Maturity

Besides being a prominent element of CDM, time perspective has also been identified as an important aspect of career maturity.

A group of researchers (Savickas, Silling, &

Schwartz, 1984) included time perspective in their study which explored the relationship of this element to three major process dimensions in career development. The three dimensions were attitudinal vocational maturity, cognitive vocational maturity, and career decision-making. Their hypothesis, which was supported, stated that time perspective, defined as how relevant the future is to current behaviors and choices, is a component of attitudinal vocational maturity and career decision-making but not a component of cognitive vocational maturity. One of the most striking findings as it relates to the present study, was that the variable called knowledge of the preferred occupation did not correlate with cognitive vocational maturity but it did correlate with attitudinal vocational maturity. The authors suggested that perhaps such a correlation exists because knowledge of the preferred occupation is a result of exploration which is a function of planfulness and exploratory attitudes. In the present study the exploratory activities are the RCE(s).

Exploratory activities are deemed an outstanding feature of career maturity by other researchers. Greenhaus, Hawkins, and Brenner (1983) emphasized that the activities of career exploration lead to increased

knowledge and strong expectations about a given career choice which will likely lead to increased satisfaction with the decision. They found support for the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between career exploration and career decision-making. They also found support for the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between career exploration and satisfaction with the career decision.

Similarly, the level of certainty of one's occupational preferences, known as career choice crystallization, was examined for its association with the resolution of career development tasks or career maturity (Blustein, 1988). His review of the literature found a low correlation between vocational maturity and career decidedness. The results of that study indicated that career choice crystallization is associated with some attitudinal dimensions of vocational maturity but only negligibly with cognitive dimensions of vocational maturity.

These attitudinal dimensions of career maturity are also reflected in Super's vocational development tasks (as cited in Osipow, 1983), particularly the first two tasks of crystallization and specification. Although crystallization is presumed to be completed during the

ages of 14 to 18 and specification is believed to be typically accomplished between the ages of 18 to 21, it is important to realize that these are average ages. Especially for individuals enrolled in college, the periods of development may be extended.

Although social learning theory approaches to career counseling have not typically been viewed as influencing ongoing career maturation, this approach does focus upon the process of career choice. The process of deciding upon each occupation occurs at some point on a career maturity timeline. This study will attempt to ascertain relationship between career maturity and RCE(s) which can be paralled to social learning theory's learning experiences.

Special Concerns for Liberal Arts Majors

Students enrolled in a program of liberal arts/ general education often face difficulties translating that education into a career. Figler (1988) noted that there is widespread misunderstanding about the connection between education and jobs in which people believe the sole purpose of school is to become trained for a specific career; therefore, as a college student it is necessary to choose a field of study which will guarantee a good position in the labor market. It is logical to

assume that most individuals, especially college students, will be concerned at some point with how a course of study will assist them in their careers. Additionally, for liberal arts students there is a choice among a multitude of career options. These students will have to create the focus for themselves rather than it being predetermined by their academic major (Figler, 1988).

Throughout the three hundred year history of American higher education a battle has raged between liberal education and practical training (Green & Salem, 1988). These authors and others (Sagen, 1982-1983; Wilson, 1988) agree that a liberal arts education is most valuable when coupled with work-learning experiences. Simpson's survey (as cited in Wilson, 1988) of the University of Virginia's Arts and Sciences alumni revealed that 91% still recommended a liberal arts degree and 84% recommended supplemental internships and career-related part-time jobs.

Another study by Green, Klug, Neider, and Salem (as cited in Green & Salem, 1988) found that graduates of a liberal arts program who had participated in an internship during their undergraduate education evidenced more post-graduate job satisfaction than did liberal arts

students who did not have an internship. Kingston and Nock (also cited in Green & Salem, 1988) found that liberal arts graduates who had clear career goals at graduation also reported higher levels of satisfaction with first jobs than did graduates who did not have clear career goals at graduation. A related assumption of the present study is that students who have had at least one RCE will have clearer career goals as part of their higher level of career maturity.

Weston (1983) also looked beyond the traditional purposes of cooperative education to include the effects on three areas of personal development as identified by Chickering: competence, autonomy, and purpose. In relation to the development of competence Yensco (as cited in Weston, 1983) found that cooperative-education graduates were more mature at graduation that were non-cooperative-education graduates. Cornelius (cited in Weston, 1983) developed a questionnaire for use with cooperative education students and found significant positive differences in levels of career awareness from pre-co-op to post-co-op experiences.

A perusal by Weston (1983) of various cooperative education programs' brochures revealed that some have been designed to accomplish these three developmental

objectives. One brochure mentioned the work experience as "...a maturing experience" (p. 29) while another noted that "adding work to the study program develops confidence, maturity..." (p. 29).

It seems, then, that any RCE would have a significant impact on students' development during college, especially in the area of career planning.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Because of the previously stated special career concerns of liberal arts students, the present study's sample consisted of 31 students who were enrolled in an upper-division English literature course at The University of Texas at Austin during the first summer session, 1990. Six additional respondents were obtained through the Career Center at the same university. These students were using the services of the Career Center and voluntarily agreed to participate after being informed of the research project by intake and front desk staff.

Of the 37 total respondents 23 were female and 14 were male. The majority of the students fit into two age categories with 19 respondents being between 17-22 years old and 17 respondents being between 23-28 years old. Only one respondent was over 28 years old. An overwhelming number of the respondents were seniors (27). The remainder included five juniors, three graduate students, and two sophomores. Liberal arts majors represented 81% of the sample with 30 respondents.

Instruments

Each student received a packet containing three

forms: an autobiographical sketch (Appendix A); the Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale (CMI-AS), (Appendix B); and a Relevant Career Experience (RCE) questionnaire (Appendix C).

The first form, the autobiographical sketch, included questions concerning gender, age, year in school, major, and postgraduate career plans.

The second form, the CMI-AS, consisted of 75 true or false items. The resultant score is a measure of the individual's career maturity based on five subscales (Crites, 1978). The CMI-AS administered in this study was the second edition (Counseling Form B-1) of which 60% of the items are from the first edition, Form A-1. Due to this carryover of items from the previous edition, Crites (1978) stated that there is some applicability of the reliability and validity statistics from the screening form to the counseling form of the Attitude Scale. The manual further reported internal consistency reliability estimates for the five attitude subscales ranging from .50 to .72.

Addressing the validation of the model the manual (Crites, 1978) called for further research. Since then studies have been conducted and some have indicated a lack of clear support for construct validity of the model

(Chodzinski & Randhawa, 1983; Frary, 1984) due to significant proportions of the variance in the CMI scores being accounted for by such factors as intelligence, achievement, and commonalities among the subtests. However, another subsequent investigation by Alvi and Khan (1983) found support more consistent with Crites' reports for the construct validity of the CMI in that the Attitude Scale and the Competence Test do, in fact, measure different aspects of career maturity. Additionally, Guthrie and Herman (1982) noted that over 500 studies have used the CMI as a testing instrument.

The third form, the RCE questionnaire (Appendix C), consisted of five items pertaining to the student's potential work experience(s).

Procedure

The three forms were administered on a group basis in one 45-minute session to the 31 members of the upper-division English class. The six respondents from the Career Center filled out the three forms in one session on an individual basis.

The first form, Appendix A, included a question regarding the student's career plans immediately following graduation. The responses were coded according to Holland's occupational classification, R-I-A-S-E-C, as

described in The Occupations Finder (1977). Only the primary letter of the correpsonding code was used. The same coding system was used for items from the third form, Appendix C, pertaining to the student's current career choice and relevant career/work experience(s) (RCEs) to determine if the work experience was indeed an RCE to the current career choice. If the work experience had the same first-letter Holland code as did the current career choice the experience was considered an RCE.

Then, the CMI scores, Appendix B, were examined in conjunction with the presence or lack of an RCE to determine if the students with the RCEs also scored higher on the CMI-AS (hypothesis one).

To test hypothesis two the level of satisfaction with the career decision was compared for students with and without an RCE.

Similarly, for hypothesis three the level of confidence that the career decision could be implemented was compared for students with and without an RCE.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In order to ascertain the influences of relevant career experiences (RCEs) on college students' career decision making (CDM) the obtained data was analyzed with respect to each of the three hypotheses.

The Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale (CMI-AS) scores ranged from 21 to 44. Of the students who responded to the RCE item, "Have you ever been involved in a work experience that you feel involved activities similar to the activities of your current choice?" (Appendix C, #5), 21 responded affirmatively and 12 responded negatively for a total of 33 cases.

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated that individuals with at least one RCE will have a higher level of career maturity than individuals without an RCE. The mean CMI-AS score of the 21 students who reported having been involved in an RCE was 36.762 while the mean CMI-AS score of the 12 students who reported not having been involved in an RCE was 32.500 (Table 1). The difference in these two groups' career maturity scores was found to be significant (p=.036).

An analysis of variance of students' CMI-AS scores

using sex and work experience (RCE) further indicated support for this first hypothesis when results showed that only the RCEs resulted in differences in career maturity ($p=.130$).

A Pearson correlation matrix (Table 2) also supported this hypothesis as the CMI-AS scores were positively correlated with work experience (RCE) at the $p<.05$ level.

Hypothesis Two

The data were also analyzed in relation to the second hypothesis which stated that individuals with at least one RCE will be more satisfied with their career decision than individuals without an RCE. A t-test was performed on the students' reported level of satisfaction with their career decision and was grouped by work experience in terms of students with and without an RCE. The mean satisfaction score for the students with an RCE was 4.667 (Table 1) on a scale from one to six with "one" representing "not at all satisfied" through to "six" representing "completely satisfied" (Appendix C). The mean satisfaction score for the students without an RCE was 4.333 on the same one-to-six scale. The differences between the two groups' levels of satisfaction with their career decisions was not significant.

Table 1

Mean Scores for Students With and Without an RCE on Measures of Career Maturity, Satisfaction, and Confidence

	n	M	SD
1. CMI-AS score	(33)		
students with RCE	21	36.762	4.888
students without RCE	12	32.500	6.172
2. Satisfaction Rating	(33)		
students with RCE	21	4.667	0.913
students without RCE	12	4.333	1.073
3. Confidence Rating	(33)		
students with RCE	21	4.714	1.309
students without RCE	12	3.583	1.311

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Hypotheses Variables

Subscale	1	2	3	4
1. CMI-AS	1.00			
2. Work Experience	0.366*	1.00		
3. Satisfaction	0.397*	0.168	1.00	
4. Confidence	0.399*	0.394*	0.334**	1.00

*p≤.05 **p≤.10

The previously mentioned Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 2) revealed that work experience (RCE) was not significantly correlated with the students' level of satisfaction with their career decisions. From this same correlation matrix it can be noted that satisfaction with the career decision was postively correlated with the students' level of confidence that they could implement their career decisions ($p<.10$).

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis which stated that individuals with at least one RCE will be more confident about implementing their career choice than individuals without an RCE was examined and support for the hypothesis was evidenced. A t-test performed on the students' reported level of confidence grouped by work experience did find significant differences between the two groups ($p=.023$). The 21 students with an RCE had a mean confidence score of 4.714, again on the one-to-six scale, while the 12 students without an RCE had a mean confidence score of 3.583 (Table 1).

The Pearson correlation matrix showed that work experience (RCE) was postively correlated with confidence at the $p<.05$ level.

Other Findings

In addition to the previously mentioned analysis of data directly related to the three hypotheses, some other findings are also of interest.

When a t-test was performed on the CMI-AS scores grouped by sex there were no significant differences for the mean maturity scores between males (35.739) and females (34.214).

The Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that the CMI-AS scores were also positively correlated with satisfaction and confidence each at the $p<.05$ level.

As stated in chapter two, time perspective or the individual's ability to incorporate past experiences into an anticipation of a future career, is also an important consideration when examining career maturity. Of the 21 students who reported having been involved in an RCE, eight were involved in the RCE before making a career decision. Surprisingly, this subgroup's mean CMI-AS score (34.875) was slightly below the mean for all the students with an RCE.

The same subgroup had a mean satisfaction rating (4.375) barely below the mean for the entire group of students reporting an RCE. This subgroup's mean confidence rating (5.125) was higher than the mean

confidence rating for the entire group.

A related finding indicated that of the 21 students with an RCE, 13 were involved in the RCE after they had already made their career choice. These students had a mean CMI-AS score of 37.932 which was slightly higher than the entire group of students with an RCE.

This subgroup had a mean satisfaction rating (4.846) comparable with the entire group that had been involved in an RCE but had a mean confidence rating (4.462) slightly below the confidence rating of the entire RCE group.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Models of career decision making (CDM) have been variously conceptualized. As part of their theoretical stance most of the models address some of the influences on CDM as discussed in the second chapter of this report.

The relationships examined in the three previously stated hypotheses are closely tied to aspects of social learning theory (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976) as well as aspects of developmental theory (Super, 1983). Social learning theory's description of positive influences on occupational preferences and entry into a career are represented in this study by the work experience/relevant career experience (RCE) factor. The time perspective element of Super's (1983) developmental approach to CDM is represented in the present investigation by career maturity since time persepctive is considered to be a principle dimension of career maturity.

Hypothesis One

The analysis of variance yielded significant differences in career maturity scores between the students with an RCE and the students without an RCE. The positive correlation between work experience (RCE)

and career maturity scores also provided support for the hypothesis that college students with at least one RCE would have higher levels of career maturity than college students without an RCE.

Based on these results an implication for career counseling services on a college campus would be to provide more professionally-oriented experiential learning activities (RCEs).

According to Osipow (1983) one of the shortcomings of interventions based on social learning theory is the minimal attention given to the individual's adjustment to a job. Participating in RCEs while in college might be one way for students to begin that adjustment process gradually while also actively exploring assorted career options.

If the RCEs are utilized as a mechanism by which students foster their career maturity it might be beneficial to design distinctive formats of RCE opportunities to coincide with a student's current level of career maturity (Sagen, 1982-83; Raiola & Sugerman, 1984). In such a scenario these researchers suggested the following: initial internships be used for observation and exploration; intermediate internships stress acquisition of skills and competencies: and,

advanced internships provide paraprofessional experiences with an opportunity for evaluation of performance.

A study by Brown (cited in Weston, 1983) of alumni from 12 institutions found that although cooperative education experiences did have significant effects on student career development, the impact diminished over time. This finding would seem to further support the notion of progressive levels of RCEs with an emphasis on providing experiences during the earlier years as well as opportunities during the junior and senior years in college.

It is important to note that although the previously mentioned programs emphasize internships and co-ops, the RCE could take other forms such as work shadowing, volunteering, or part-time employment. The important issue would be that the RCE be implemented as part of the student's curriculum or in conjunction with a career counseling program that would provide corresponding time spent with a counselor, faculty, advisor, and/or other students discussing and guiding the RCE experience.

With such a holistic approach to an RCE, the student would more likely be able to use the impact of such a work-learning experience to increase the accuracy of self-knowledge available for future career decisions

(Jones & Gelatt, 1979). This idea relates to the time perspective element referred to previously as it relates to career maturity. One of the goals, then, of the RCE would be to teach the students how to be aware of and remember their reactions to the RCEs--how each situation influenced them, to what specific events they responded, how they felt during the experience--which might help them more readily tie an RCE to future career decisions. A comprehensive RCE including the work experience coupled with professional assistance might help a student to explore these areas.

Hypothesis Two

Neither the results of the t-test nor the correlation matrix revealed support for the second hypothesis which stated that students with an RCE would be more satisfied with their career decision than students without an RCE. This finding is in contrast with the results of a related study by Greenhaus, Hawkins, and Brenner, (1983) who found a positive relationship between career exploration and satisfaction with career decisions among undergraduate college students.

The career exploration activities in that study included part-time or summer employment relevant to the

career decision. However, those researchers also found that the career exploration activity, part-time employment, did not explain a significant portion of the variance in satisfaction when controlling for background characteristics. Instead, when controlling for background characteristics, only self-exploration continued to predict satisfaction. Those researchers stated that value clarity, career knowledge, and reward expectations seemed to explain that relationship. They further stated that value clarity had a stronger relationship to satisfication than did career knowledge.

In the present study value clarity was not one of the measured variables. For future research it might be beneficial to include a measure of students' value clarity. Several theorists have noted the importance of value satisfaction as a measure of vocational adjustment (Ginzberg, 1970: Katz, 1969b; Super, 1962). Alvi (cited in Richmond, 1985) concluded that additional educational and occupational experiences often result in a clarification of one's values.

In future research it might be helpful to determine whether the student's RCE was part of a comprehensive career development program as described in the previous section. In the present study it is not known if those

students with an RCE were also receiving guidance as part of a comprehensive program which might have helped them clarify values.

Hypothesis Three

The t-test and correlation coefficients supported the third hypothesis which asserted that students with an RCE would be more confident about implementing their career choice than students without an RCE.

What the student gains from the RCE that increases the confidence level is not certain. However, it might be inferred that the RCE allows the student to develop necessary job skills, develop an initial professional network, understand more about the reality of the world of work, and appreciate the effective methods of job search. Future research might include questions of this nature.

An RCE which is part of a comprehensive program would include active participation by the student incorporating the impact of the RCE in the above-mentioned areas as they apply to the student's future career options.

Other Findings

As previously stated the subgroup that reported having been involved in an RCE before making a career

decision had a slightly lower mean career maturity score than did the entire group. Ware (1980) stated that differential relationships between career-related preferences and certainty about career choice was due to differences in levels of career maturity. He elaborated saying that students with lower levels of career maturity are more likely to rely on specific and concrete events to generalize about future career choices than are students with higher levels of career maturity.

An implication for career counselors or other professionals involved with college students would be to not only provide opportunities for RCEs but to also provide occasions for students to develop and enhance their career decision-making skills.

The subgroup reporting their RCE as occurring before their career decision reported mean satisfaction and mean confidence ratings slightly below and higher, respectively, than the entire group's mean ratings. It is not known what factors affected these two self-ratings.

One possible explanation for the satisfaction rating might be that the majority of the sample was in the youngest age group, 17-22 years old. Typically, students in this age group are making and trying to implement

career choices for the first time. Even with some career-related experience these individuals are likely to have some questions regarding their career decisions. It seems that an important point for career counselors to recognize is that students do not make this decision as the ultimate and final career choice. Students need to be given opportunities to discuss their RCEs in relation to their current career choices and also to investigate other related careers.

It is plausible that because this subgroup was involved in RCEs before they made their career decisions they feel confident that they have made a good choice--a choice that they can implement since they have already implemented it at least in a temporary setting. One role of career counseling might be to help the student translate the learning experiences of the RCE into skills and knowledge that they can bring to a future career.

The subgroup that reported their RCEs as occurring after making their career decisions had a mean maturity score slightly higher than the entire group. If viewed again in the context of career maturity, it is possible that these students did not use the RCE as a means to make their career decisions. Perhaps, they used the RCE as a reality test or a skill-building exercise for the

career choice already made.

An implication for career counseling services would be to provide each student participating in an RCE with a supplemental program to emphasize and expand on the students' work-learning experiences. Such exercises might include: keeping a diary of daily RCE activities; consulting with professors of courses whose content corresponds with the RCE activities about project implementation; exploration of other career fields involving similar vocational activities; practice translating newly acquired skills into a resume and interview format.

This subgroup had comparable mean satisfaction ratings and slightly lower mean confidence ratings than did the entire group. The fact that these students had been able to learn firsthand about working in a given career field may have influenced their feelings about finding permanent employment in that area. Because the majority of these students were 17-22 years of age it can be assumed that few, if any, have had many opportunities to attempt implementing a full-time career. This lack of job-search experience might very likely color their views about landing a first job.

As career counselors it would be important, as

stated earlier, to assist students in making connections and transitions from higher education and RCEs to a career.

Appendix A

FORM 1

Instructions: Please answer each of the following items as accurately as possible. Do not put your name on this form so that the results will remain anonymous. Thank you for filling out this form.

1) Your gender: male_____ female_____

2) Your age: 17-22___ 23-28___ over 28___

3) Classification: freshman____ sophmore____
junior____ senior____ post-graduate____

4) Major: liberal arts_____ other____

5) What are your career plans immediately following graduation?

Appendix B

ANSWER SHEET
for
CAREER MATURITY INVENTORY-ATTITUDE SCALE

Directions: There are a number of statements about career choice on the following pages. Career choice means the kind of job or work which you think you will probably be doing when you have finished all of your schooling.

Read the statements on the attached pages and mark your answers on this page. If you agree or mostly agree with the statement, mark a "T" by that statement number. If you disagree or mostly disagree with the statement, mark an "F" by that statement number.

1. ____	20. ____	39. ____	58. ____
2. ____	21. ____	40. ____	59. ____
3. ____	22. ____	41. ____	60. ____
4. ____	23. ____	42. ____	61. ____
5. ____	24. ____	43. ____	62. ____
6. ____	25. ____	44. ____	63. ____
7. ____	26. ____	45. ____	64. ____
8. ____	27. ____	46. ____	65. ____
9. ____	28. ____	47. ____	66. ____
10. ____	29. ____	48. ____	67. ____
11. ____	30. ____	49. ____	68. ____
12. ____	31. ____	50. ____	69. ____
13. ____	32. ____	51. ____	70. ____
14. ____	33. ____	52. ____	71. ____
15. ____	34. ____	53. ____	72. ____
16. ____	35. ____	54. ____	73. ____
17. ____	36. ____	55. ____	74. ____
18. ____	37. ____	56. ____	75. ____
19. ____	38. ____	57. ____	

1 I often daydream about what I want to be, but I really haven't chosen a line of work yet.

2 If I can just help others in my work, I'll be happy.

3 Everyone seems to tell me something different; as a result I don't know which kind of work to choose.

4 It's probably just as easy to be successful in one occupation as it is in another.

5 In order to choose a job, you need to know what kind of person you are.

6 It doesn't matter which job you choose as long as it pays well.

7 I plan to follow the line of work my parents suggest.

8 As long as I can remember, I've known what kind of work I want to do.

9 You should decide for yourself what kind of work to do.

10 I don't know how to go about getting into the kind of work I want to do.

11 Work is worthwhile mainly because it lets you buy the things you want.

12 I know very little about the requirements of jobs.

13 When choosing an occupation, you should consider several different jobs.

14 If you have some doubts about what you want to do, ask your parents or friends for advice and suggestions.

15 I often feel that there is a real difference between what I am and what I want to be in my occupation.

16 There are so many things to consider in choosing an occupation, it is hard to make a decision.

17 You should choose an occupation which gives you a chance to help others.

18 The best thing to do is to try out several jobs, and then choose the one you like best.

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19 There is no point deciding on a job when the future is so uncertain.

20 Working is much like going to school.

21 There is only one occupation for each person.

22 Your parents probably know better than anybody else which occupation you should enter.

23 I want to really accomplish something in my work – to make a great discovery or earn a lot of money or help a great number of people.

24 When it comes to choosing a job, I'll make up my own mind.

25 I don't know what courses I should take in school.

26 The greatest appeal of a job to me is the opportunity it provides for getting ahead.

27 I can't understand how some people can be so certain about what they want to do.

28 I spend a lot of time wishing I could do work I know I can never do.

29 Work is dull and unpleasant.

30 Sometimes you have to take a job that is not your first choice.

31 I keep changing my occupational choice.

32 Once you choose a job, you can't choose another one.

33 As far as choosing an occupation is concerned, something will come along sooner or later.

34 I'm not going to worry about choosing an occupation until I'm out of school.

35 You can do any kind of work you want to do as long as you try hard.

36 You get into an occupation mostly by chance.

37 You can't go very far wrong by following your parents' advice about which job to choose.

38 Whether you are interested in a particular kind of work is not as important as whether you can do it.

39 Choosing an occupation is something you have to do on your own.

40 I seldom think about the job I want to enter.

41 By the time you are 13, you should have your mind pretty well made up about the occupation you intend to enter.

42 I have little or no idea of what working will be like.

43 I keep wondering how I can reconcile the kind of person I am with the kind of person I want to be in my future occupation.

44 I would like to rely on someone else to choose an occupation for me.

45 I'd rather not work than take a job I don't like.

46 I'd rather work than play.

47 I guess everybody has to go to work sooner or later, but I don't look forward to it.

48 I don't know whether my future occupation will allow me to be the kind of person I want to be.

49 It's who you know, not what you know, that's important in a job.

50 Your job is important because it determines how much you can earn.

51 You shouldn't worry about choosing a job since you don't have anything to say about it anyway.

52 I don't want my parents to tell me which occupation I should choose.

53 You almost always have to settle for a job that's less than you had hoped for.

54 If someone would tell me which occupation to enter, I would feel much better.

55 I am having difficulty in preparing myself for the work I want to do.

56 I can't seem to become very concerned about my future occupation.

57 I really can't find any work that has much appeal to me.

58 I'm not going to give up anything to get the job I want.

59 Knowing what jobs are open is more important than knowing what you are good at when you choose an occupation.

60 The job I choose has to give me plenty of freedom to do what I want.

61 I don't know whether my occupational plans are realistic.

62 When trying to make an occupational choice, I wish that someone would tell me what to do.

63 I have so many interests it's hard to choose any one occupation.

64 You should choose a job in which you can someday become famous.

65 You should choose a job that allows you to do exactly what you want to do.

66 Entering one job is about the same as entering another.

67 Parents usually can choose the most appropriate jobs for their children.

68 You should choose an occupation, then plan how to enter it.

69 I feel that I should do what my parents want me to do.

70 Making an occupational decision confuses me because I don't feel that I know enough about myself or the world of work.

71 When I am trying to study, I often find myself daydreaming about what it will be like when I start working.

72 It's hard to imagine myself in any occupation.

73 I feel that my occupational goals are so high that I'll never be able to attain them.

74 The most important part of work is the pleasure which comes from doing it.

75 There may not be any openings for the job I want most.

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Appendix C

FORM 3

Instructions: Please answer each item. It is important that you respond as accurately as possible based on your work experiences. The work experiences can include: volunteering; internships/coops; part-time work; or guided observation of another worker.

Items #3 and #4 require that you respond with one number between 1 and 6 with 1 meaning the least and 6 meaning the most.

When you have completed this questionnaire, please turn it in with the other two forms. Thank you very much for your time.

1) What is your current career choice? (Be specific as to title) _____
_____

2) When did you make the decision about your current career choice (month & year)? _____

3) How satisfied are you with you current career choice? (please circle one number)

1 2 3 4 5 6
not.....completely
at all

4) How confident are you that you can secure a position in your current career choice once you have graduated from college? (please circle one number)

1 2 3 4 5 6
not.....completely
at all

5) Have you ever been involved in a work experience that you feel involved activities similar to the activities of your current choice?

yes_____ no_____

a) was the experience (check as appropriate)
_____part-time work
_____internship
_____coop
_____volunteering
_____shadowing (guided observation of another worker)

b) briefly describe your activities during that experience_____
_____
_____

c) when did you participate in this experience (months & year)_____

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